

## Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 SIL-01 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-07

INR-07 LAB-04 NSAE-00 PA-01 PRS-01 USIE-00 INRE-00

NSC-05 NSCE-00 SS-15 SP-02 L-03 /057 W

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O R 202232Z OCT 76

FM AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 4817

INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEGUCIGALPA 5020

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ELAB, ENID, HO

SUBJECT: NORTH COAST FEDERATION CONVENTION

REF: TEGUCIGALPA 1929, TEGUCIGALPA 1585

TEGUCIGALPA 1474, TEGUCIGALPA 0551 75 TEGUCIGALPA 5303

BEGIN SUMMARY: THE COMMUNIST CONTROLLED UNIONS WITHIN THE NORTH COAST LABOR FEDERATION (FESITRANH) HAVE FORCED THE CONVOCAION OF AN EXTRAORDINARY CONVENTION OF THE FESITRANH FOR OCTOBER 23, 1976. WHILE SPECIFIC COMMUNIST PLANS FOR THE CONVENTION ARE UNKNOWN AT THIS POINT, IT IS NOT UNLIKELY THAT THEY MAY TRY TO TAKEOVER THE FESITRANH. END SUMMARY.

1.EMBASSY SOURCES HAVE REPORTED THAT AN EXTRAORDINARY CONVENTION OF THE FESITRANH HAS BEEN CALLED FOR OCTOBER 23, 1976. IT IS REPORTEDLY A ONE-DAY CONVENTION AND HAS CLEARLY BEEN FORCED BY THE COMMUNIST ELEMENTS WITHIN THE FESITRANH IN RESPONSE TO DEEPENING CONFLICTS BETWEEN THE COMMUNIST AND DEMOCRATICALLY CONTROLLED SECTORS OF THAT LABOR FEDERATION. THE COMMUNIST CONTROLLED UNITED BRANDS FRUIT WORKERS' UNION (SITRATERCO) INITIATED THE PETITION DRIVE FOR  
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THE EXTRAORDINARY CONVENTION, WHICH WAS CARRIED OUT BY KNOWN

COMMUNIST ACTIVISTS.

2. THE THEORETICAL CAUSE FOR CALLING THE EXTRAORDINARY CONVENTION WAS A PUBLIC DISPUTE BETWEEN FESITRANH AND SITRATERCO AS TO WHO WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR A SUPREME COURT DECISION AWARDED BACK WAGES TO SITRATERCO WORKERS RESULTING FROM THE LABOR SUSPENSIONS WHICH WERE A PRODUCT OF HURRICAN FIFI. HOWEVER, WHILE THAT ISSUE WAS USED AS THE TRIGGERING MECHANISM, THE CONVENTION WAS MORE LIKELY CALLED DUE TO THE POSSIBLE LOSS OF THE STANDARD FRUIT UNION (SUTRASFCO) BY THE COMMUNISTS IN THE NEAR FUTURE AND DUE TO PROVEN FINANCIAL CORRUPTION WITHIN THAT UNION.

3. WHILE EMBASSY SURCES INDICATE THAT THE EXTRAORDINARY CONVENTION IS LIKELY TO PRODUCE NOTHING MORE THAN A STRONG CONFRONTATION BETWEEN THE DEMOCRATIC AND COMMUNIST FORCES, THE POSSIBILITY OF A TAKEOVER ATTEMPT BY THE COMMUNISTS CANNOT BE EXCLUDED. IT IS LIKELY THAT THE COMMUNISTS VIEW THIS AS THE MOST OPPORTUNE TIME TO TAKE OVER THE FESITRANH, AND THUS THE BULK OF THE HONDURAN LABOR MOVEMENT, GIVEN THE DEMOCRATIC THREAT TO SUTRASFCO OVER THE CORRUPTION ISSUE. LEGALITIES OF A TAKEOVER ATTEMPT AT THIS TIME ARE NOT CLEAR, THOUGH IT IS LIKELY THAT THE CURRENT MINLAB WOULD BE SYMPATHETIC.

4. BEGIN COMMENT: WHILE A TAKEOVER ATTEMPT OF FESITRANH, PARTICULARLY A SUCCESSFUL ONE, WOULD AT THE MOMENT APPEAR TO BE UNLIKELY, IT IS NONETHELESS A REAL POSSIBILITY. THE THREAT FROM THE DEMOCRATIC FORCES TO RECAPTURE SUFRASFCO, AND THUS REDUCE COMMUNIST INFLUENCE WITHIN FESITRANH SIGNIFICANTLY, MAY WELL HAVE PRECIPITATED AN EARLIER THAN PLANNED TAKEOVER ATTEMPT. SHOULD THAT BE THE CASE, CHANCES FOR A SUCCESSFUL COMMUNIST TAKEOVER OF THE FESITRANH WOULD BE RELATIVELY GOOD. THE DEGREE OF COMMUNIST SUPPORT WITHIN THE FEDERATION HAVE INCREASED SIGNIFICANTLY SINCE THE APRIL CONVENTION. THE LEADERSHIP OF FESITRANH WOULD STILL SEEM TO BE LESS THAN FULLY AWARE OF THE DEGREE OF THE THREAT REPRESENTED TO THEIR DEMOCRATIC LEADERSHIP. IN ANY EVENT, THE EXTRAORDINARY CONVENTION IS LIKELY TO PRODUCE A HIGH DEGREE OF CONFRONTATION WHICH CAN ONLY SERVE TO FURTHER

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REDUCE THE INFLUENCE OF THE DEMOCRATIC LABOR MOVEMENT IN HONDURAS. THE EMBASSY WILL REPORT AS SOON AS POSSIBLE ON THE OUTCOME OF THE CONVENTION. END COMMENT.  
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